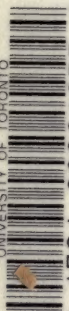


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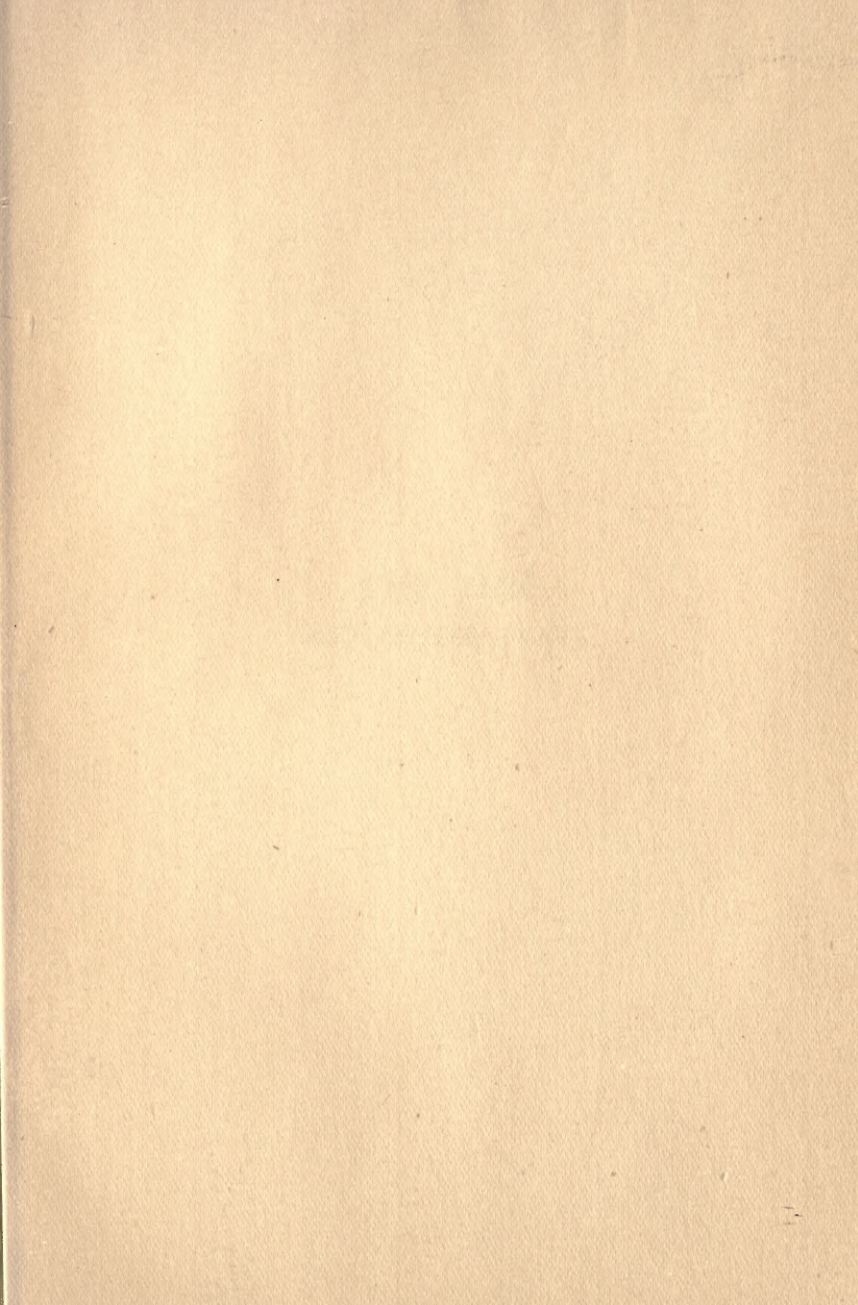
THE INN

And Other Plays

By MARY C. ROYLANCE COURT

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THE INN
AND OTHER PLAYS

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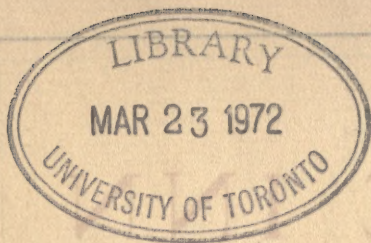
MARY C. ROYLANCE COURT

LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

187 PICCADILLY, W.

1921



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LONDON
ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS
187 Piccadilly, W.
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THE INN.



THE INN.

A Play in One Act.

Characters :

ARCHIE DAVENPORT.

CHERRY.

MRS. GAMAGE.

SCENE : *A Country Inn.*

TIME : *To-day.*

The curtain rises on the room, or hall, of an old Inn.

CHERRY—a very pretty girl—discovered polishing the old oak.

ARCHIE DAVENPORT enters by the door up L.C. wrapped up in motor furs.

ARCHIE [*comes down c. and looks at CHERRY*].

CHERRY [*stops in her work and looks at him*].

ARCHIE. Very cold and icy to-day.

CHERRY. Yes, sir, very cold and icy !

ARCHIE [*aside*]. What a nicely modulated voice. [*Looks at her—turns away.*] What a pretty girl. [*To her*] Can I have a cup of tea ?

CHERRY. Certainly, sir ! Mother is out, but——

ARCHIE. Please don't put yourself out on my account.

CHERRY. That's all right, sir. I will bring you a tray in a few minutes. [*She goes towards door L.I.E.*

ARCHIE [*stopping her*]. Will you please let my chauffeur have something as soon as possible.

CHERRY. Yes, sir.

THE INN.

ARCHIE. We are both perished with the cold.

CHERRY. I will see to it at once. [*Exit* L.1.E.]

ARCHIE. [*aside — goes down R. — turns*]. Pretty girl! Wonder who she is. [*Looks round*]. Great improvement in the place since I came courting my wife here. By jove, yes! [*Musingly*] Yes! my wife! [*Sits on chair* R.C.] Where can she be? I must go very carefully in my pursuit!

CHERRY *re-enters* at L.1.E.

CHERRY. Rather early for tea, sir, I find, so you must wait till the kettle boils. [*Turns to go*].

ARCHIE [*beckons her*]. I say——

CHERRY [*stops at door*]. Yes?

ARCHIE [*rises—comes c*]. You're a pretty kid!

CHERRY. Do you think so.

ARCHIE. Yes! I do think so! How long have you been here?

CHERRY [*comes to table and speaks across table*]. Well, whether I'm pretty or not is no business of yours.

ARCHIE [*smiles*]. Really?

CHERRY. Yes!

ARCHIE. Oh! oh! [*Laughs*].

CHERRY. Nor do I feel inclined to tell you how long I have been here, either! [*Lifts her chin in the air*].

ARCHIE [*in the c., looking over at her*]. Hoity! Toity! that is rather a cheeky answer!

CHERRY. Not so cheeky as your remarks!

ARCHIE. Indeed?

CHERRY. I hope Mother will come in soon; she doesn't like me to wait on strangers.

ARCHIE. Perhaps she is wise.

CHERRY. She is very wise. I will bring in your tea as soon as the water has boiled.

ARCHIE. That's very generous of you!

CHERRY. Here are to-day's papers! [*Takes them off the table, brings them round the table, and hands them to him*].

THE INN.

ARCHIE. Thank you! [Takes them.]

CHERRY. Shall I take your coat and shake the rain off?

ARCHIE. Thanks. Let my chauffeur attend to it.

CHERRY. Just as you like!

ARCHIE. Where is he?

CHERRY. In the kitchen.

ARCHIE [*hands her the coat*]. Thank you!

CHERRY [*taking the coat*]. [Exit L. I. E.]

ARCHIE [*remains in c. of the stage*]. I shall not get any information out of her now. [*Takes out cigarette-case and cigarette from it, lights cigarette, and looks round.*] It must be seventeen years since I parted from my wife, in a rage. [*Crosses to chair R. and sits down, blows smoke, and thinks.*] Not one word or line have I had from her since that day. I was drunk! [*Pauses.*] I was in the wrong, and I was a scoundrel to have left her to fend for herself. [*Blowing smoke.*] Well, it's never too late to mend, and so I must try and find her and take her out to my promising farm in Canada.

CHERRY enters.

CHERRY. Mother has just come in, sir, and is bringing in your tea. Sorry to keep you waiting so long.

ARCHIE [*graciously*]. Not at all. What can't be cured must be endured.

CHERRY [*aside*]. Like master, like man; they both say funny things. [Exit.]

ARCHIE [*looking in direction of door.*] Strange little person.

MRS. GAMAGE, *very fat, short, and plain*, enters with tray.

MRS. G. I hope, sir, you didn't think I was never coming?

ARCHIE. Oh! not at all. [*Looks at her.*] Good Lord! I do hope this is not my wife. [Rises.]

MRS. G. Here is your tea, sir.

ARCHIE [*crosses to chair R. of table*]. Oh! thank you!

THE INN.

MRS. G. And I thought you would like a couple of poached eggs.

ARCHIE. Very thoughtful of you!

MRS. G. There is some marmalade.

ARCHIE. Splendid!

MRS. G. And some strawberry jam!

ARCHIE. Quite a feast! [*Sits.*]

MRS. G. I don't give any one my best jam!

ARCHIE. No?

MRS. G. No, sir; but you must have had a terrible cold drive here.

ARCHIE. I have!

MRS. G. I was nearly frozen when I was out.

ARCHIE. Rather pretty part of the world this!

MRS. G. [*remains other side of table*]. Very, sir!

ARCHIE. Have you lived here long?

MRS. G. Close on eighteen years, sir!

ARCHIE [*aside*]. It is my wife. I shall cut and run; I can't face this fat old lady! [*To her.*] Charming old Inn.

MRS. G. Yes, a nice old place! been in this family over two hundred years.

ARCHIE [*aside*]. I knew it! Must be Mrs. Davenport, my legal wife. [*To her.*] I suppose you are kept pretty busy here?

MRS. G. Yes, sir; all the year round. Motoring has made such a difference to us.

ARCHIE. I suppose it has.

MRS. G. Our business for a time did very badly; that was just before Cherry was born!

ARCHIE. Cherry?

MRS. G. Yes, sir! you saw her here just now, she took your order! We really thought we should have had to sell the place.

ARCHIE. What was the cause of this bad luck?

MRS. G. A young scamp, scoundrel, ne'er-do-well of a husband.

ARCHIE. By George!

THE INN.

MRS. G. It was by George! By Gum! if ever he returns to this house I will give him such a hiding. [*Crosses stage and points over door R.I.E.*] Do you see that hunting crop?

ARCHIE [*turns and looks over door*]. Yes; what of it?

MRS. G. That's for him! He hit poor Cherry's Mother with that one evening when he was drunk, so it's waiting there for him.

ARCHIE. By George! [*Turns back to tea on table.*]

MRS. G. It will hurt him, too; I'll take care of that.

ARCHIE. What is Cherry's surname?

MRS. G. [*comes to c.*]. Davenport! What else could it be?

ARCHIE. Good God! my daughter! why did I not come over sooner? my own child! my sweet daughter.

MRS. G. [*goes above him to head of table and looks at the tea things*]. I hope that everything is to your satisfaction?

ARCHIE. Oh! thank you, yes!

MRS. G. I must go and attend to the Bar. I don't allow Cherry there.

ARCHIE. I am glad to hear it.

MRS. G. You see, she has been brought up differently to most girls in her position, and is well educated.

ARCHIE. That does you great credit.

MRS. G. But not above her station. I don't think it is fair to send girls to a fancy school, they only come back too big for their boots.

ARCHIE. Yes, yes; perhaps you are right.

MRS. G. I know I am. Cherry owns this Inn really, and if she marries a more sensible man than her mother did, the business will carry on. Oh! Lord! that father of hers; he drank, swore, and was cruel to her; I wish I had him here now, sir.

[*Going to door L.I.E.*]

THE INN.

ARCHIE. I dare say!

Mrs. G. I would give him a piece of my mind!

[Exit L.1.E.]

ARCHIE [*rises, comes c., goes and sits in chair R., looking after her*]. I am sure she would, and I should be sorry to receive it. If Cherry really is my daughter then I must stay and arrange matters, but if my 'lost' wife—I wish you had worn better—what a shock! Muriel was tall, had hair like gold, a sweet voice, and gentle manners. This lady must have grown coarse with hard work. [*Pulls out his pipe, sits back in his chair, and falls off to sleep.*]

(Pathetic, incidental music.)

A tall figure, draped, enters at door R.1.E., comes behind him down to his left side and kneels.

FIGURE. Have you come back, darling, at last? Seventeen years since you left me; before I died, I gave a letter to Cherry, ask her to show it to you. Be good to our little daughter. [*She rises slowly, goes up stage with a gliding movement, and exits quietly at R.1.E.*]

CHERRY enters at L.1.E.

CHERRY [*looking at ARCHIE*]. Asleep! Must be tired. [*Comes towards and stands watching him about three feet away from him.*] Poor man, he looks sad! tears, too, on his cheek; dreaming of past days; perhaps he is sorry for some one.

ARCHIE [*dreaming*]. Muriel, darling, forgive me! [*Waking, he looks at her, musingly, pauses.*] Oh! it is you, Cherry. I must have been dreaming.

CHERRY. Why did you say Muriel? [*Pauses.*] That was my Mother's name.

ARCHIE. Muriel was the name of my wife! [*Pauses.*] My wife lived here, her name was Davenport.

CHERRY [*starts—pauses*]. Then you—must be—my Daddy! Shall I show you something?

THE INN.

ARCHIE. Yes !

[*Going to him she throws her arms round his neck.*

CHERRY. Then, I will ! for now I know. [*Takes letter from little silk bag tied round her neck and gives it to him.*] Read it.

ARCHIE [*hesitates—opens letter—she comes near to him and places her arm round his neck*]. ‘To my darling Cherry, when she is old enough to understand.

‘Darling.—I hope you will live to grow up a big, strong girl, and manage the Inn with dear old Gamage to look after you. Some day a stranger may come along, he might be your father. If he does turn up, be good to him, put your arms round his neck, kiss him, and say, “Dad ! Mother loved you to the end ; always you were her lover and husband, and she did so long to see you again to say, All is forgiven.” To make quite sure, ask the stranger, by what name did you call my Mother.’

ARCHIE. Shall I tell you ?

CHERRY. Yes !

ARCHIE. ‘The Golden Duster.’

CHERRY [*looks at the letter*]. Yes, you are my own real Daddy. [*Puts her arms round him and wipes the tears from his eyes.*

(*There is a little incidental music here, and a pause.*)

ARCHIE. Cherry, how long ago did your Mother die ?

CHERRY. When I was about ten years old.

ARCHIE. And who is the lady you call mother ?

CHERRY. [*She rises, goes left, turns to him as he rises, and comes near to her ; he looks at her*]. She is my darling old Nanny, and does everything for me, and has done since I lost my Mother. Why did you call her ‘Your Golden Duster ?’

[*She goes to him and looks up in his face.*

ARCHIE. She was always trying to make me brighter and better, and she threw dust in other

THE INN.

people's eyes to hide my shortcomings—they were many—and I was an awful scamp.

[He sits, and she kneels at his feet.]

CHERRY. Never mind, Daddy, you will have me to look after, and there is plenty of work for you to do here. You can look after the Bar.

ARCHIE *[laughs]*. No, my kid, you have first got to come out to Canada with me. I have a lovely ranch, heaps of cattle, horses, and a very nice house; we will sell the Inn, and the purchase-money shall be yours to do what you like with. But, kid, if I take you out, am I going to lose you? All the boys out there will fall in love with you, and you will marry of them.

CHERRY. Well, you would marry Mother!

ARCHIE. No, I think not, darling; no one shall take my Muriel's place. I wish she could know how much I deplored my past conduct, and forgive.

CHERRY. Dad! read this letter; she says, 'All is forgiven.' *[He read the letter again, she with her arm round his neck and looking over his shoulder.]*

(Slow, pathetic, incidental music.)

CURTAIN to come down very slowly.

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

A Farce.

Characters :

SIR HARRY HOWARDE (*a Country Squire*).

WAITER.

LADY SAVILLE (*a Young Bride*).

SCENE : *Room in a London Hotel.*

TIME : *To-day.*

A plainly furnished room in a hotel. A table R.—chairs—fireplace. Door up L.

A little bright music for the dividing curtains to part—or take up a roller curtain.

WAITER *enters with a napkin—he whisks everything near him with this, as he talks and bustles about.*

WAITER. Now, this wants some thinkin' out. A lady is comin' 'ere to interview a butler in this room. And a gentleman is comin' 'ere to this 'otel to interview a lady's maid for his wife in another room—that is two things—now I must not make any mistake! [*Holds his left hand out and lays his forefinger in the palm.*] A gentleman is comin' 'ere to interview a lady's maid about a butler. Ah—well—I never was good at arithmetic, so I'll give it up.

LADY SAVILLE—*a beautiful young married woman—or girl of nineteen—enters—smartly dressed.*

LADY S. [*stands at door a moment*].

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

WAITER [*bows to the ground*].

LADY S. Are you the waiter?

WAITER. Yes, Mum—I was—I mean I is—and 'opes I ever will be.

LADY S. That is a very laudable idea.

WAITER. Lordable! Thank you, Mum, for the compliment!—like master—like man, and I've mixed with many lords in my time.

LADY S. This is the room in which I have to interview a butler—I think!

WAITER. I think so, Ma'am! and you couldn't 'ave a better, I give yer my word, Mum.

LADY S. Then it must be so. My husband—who has been called away—has asked me to do so.

WAITER. Of course, Mum, if your 'usband 'as arsked you to, what more do you want? Interviewin' of butlers is a gentleman's job all the same—but! butlers prefers bein' interviewed by ladies—savin' your presence for appearin' familiar—I don't blame them! I've got a weakness that way myself.

LADY S. That is very good of you to say so.

WAITER. And very good of you to think it is good of me to say so, but it's an absolute fact all the same—'Oo am I to say if any one arks in the vestibool for the intervoo, Mum?

LADY S. Lady Saville.

WAITER. Lady Saville! [*aside*]. 'Aint it a sweet sounding name! [*To her*] I am sorry, my lady, and 'opes you don't think me familiar in expressin' my views—but you are so kind and gentle—you drawed me out. Forgive me, my lady—forgive me. [*Exit.*]

LADY S. Simple soul. One of the old type now fast dying out—I wish Jack would do his own engaging of servants—but I must not grumble. After all—his mother is a great invalid, and he ought to go to her when wired for, in spite of having a bride to fuss after, he is such a darling—so I shall get through the ordeal somehow. [*Hunts through her pretty bag—*

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

placing it on the table to do so.] Where is my list of questions?

SIR HARRY HOWARDE *enters*.

LADY S. Good morning! [*aside*]. Quite a smart-looking man-servant.

SIR H. Good morning! [*aside*]. What a smart-looking lady's maid.

LADY S. I think you have come to see me about a situation, have you not?

SIR H. That is so! [*Aside*] Rather sweet! all the same, confound my wife—why would she not be well enough to interview her own lady's maid—instead of making me feel such a perfect ass—why do women always get headaches at the most inconvenient moments?

LADY S. [*aside*]. What on earth shall I ask him first? [*To him*] Oh!

SIR H. Ye'es?

LADY S. Do you like country places?

SIR H. Do I like country places? Rather!

LADY S. That is good! Quite satisfactory to begin with.

SIR H. Yes—isn't it? I dislike town very much.

LADY S. The first difficulty got over! That is excellent. Where was your last place?

SIR H. Eh? I beg your pardon—I didn't quite catch!

LADY S. [*aside*]. He is slightly deaf. [*To him*] I said where was your last place?

SIR H. My own little green patch in Cheshire!

LADY S. Really! Cheshire? a good hunting county—this is promising! I suppose you are well up in all sporting matters? loading and care of guns? and all that sort of thing! scarlet and leathers?

SIR H. Yes—of course I am—but—what—on—earth—has this to do with your duties?

LADY S. [*aside*]. What does he mean by my duties?

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

SIR H. I thought I had to ask questions—now where the dickens is my paper? [*Takes paper from waistcoat pocket.*] Ah, here we are—now we shan't be long.

LADY S. [*aside*]. A curious sort of servant!

SIR H. [*to her*]. I should like to ask you a few questions.

LADY S. [*looks at him inquiringly*]. A few questions?

SIR H. Certainly! Do you thoroughly understand hair waving?

LADY S. Hair waving? [*Aside*] Good heavens! this man is a lunatic.

SIR H. [*is looking direct at her. Aside*]. She is a devilish good girl!

LADY S. [*turns—sees the look—turns away again—aside*]. This man is a lunatic—I am certain.

SIR H. [*aside*]. I believe I've impressed her!

LADY S. He looks terribly wild—I must humour him. [*To him*] Oh! yes—yes—I do.

[*She rises and tries to get to the door.*]

SIR H. [*seeing this gets there quickly before her*]. Oh! no, you don't.

LADY S. [*resigns herself*]. Very well.

SIR H. You do dressmaking and manicuring as well as hair waving?

LADY S. Oh! yes; I do everything!

SIR H. That just suits me and saves a lot of bother! How old are you?

LADY S. Nineteen!

SIR H. By Jove! really! how ripping! awful jolly age! [*Aside*] Much too young for my wife!

LADY S. What impertinence! now my good man, I don't think you will suit me!

SIR H. [*astounded*]. No? I'm awfully sorry to hear that.

LADY S. No! so I will leave you to take some one else's situation. [*Going quickly to the door.*]

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

SIR H. [*intercepting her*]. Excuse me—you will do nothing of the kind, and you don't go until you have answered all the questions on this paper.

LADY S. I suppose I must humour him!

SIR H. With whom did you last live?

LADY S. How can you ask me such a question. I have always lived at home!

SIR H. [*hardly listening—being so anxious to get through with his questions*]. Married, or single?

LADY S. [*sighing impatiently*]. Married!

SIR H. Any children?

LADY S. I have only been married two months.

SIR H. Bless my soul—how awkward—tell me—why have you come here to be interviewed?

LADY S. I think that is a question I ought to ask you.

SIR H. Really? I like that!

LADY S. Yes—now you must really allow me to go—your questions are getting beyond a joke!

[*Edging towards the door.*]

SIR H. [*intercepting her*]. Oh! no—you don't go yet—my good woman.

LADY S. Don't you call me your good woman!

SIR H. [*aside*]. I am sure my wife will like her—and I must get her to accept. [*Still hunting up his notes.*] Are you clean?

LADY S. [*aside*]. How dare he?

SIR H. Tidy in your work and appearance? [*Aside*] That goes without saying! I think I have no fault to find with your appearance. What about your work.

LADY S. [*declines to answer*].

SIR H. You will of course have a room to yourself, and there is a charming work-room—plenty of outings. [*Aside*] Don't know what that means. [*Looks at list, then at her.*] Do you object to sitting up late?

LADY S. I suppose I must allow him to go through his objectionable list.

CHOOSING A BUTLER.

WAITER *enters quickly.*

WAITER. Sorry, my lady! sorry, Sir 'Arry—but it's just like me, I can't add two sums alike. The butler's in the pantry—no—no—the 'all! waiting to see your ladyship; and a young lady's maid is below waitin' to be intervooed by Sir 'Arry 'Owarde! and now 'aving explained what I 'ave in me 'ead and unburthened my bosom, I'll 'op it. *[Exit quickly.]*

LADY S. How extraordinary it all is! I see the mistake—we have been interviewing each other instead of servants.

SIR H. *[laughs]*. Well—of all the stupid mistakes—this is the most absurd!

LADY S. Surely you are not Jack Saville's greatest friend—Sir Harry Howarde?

SIR H. That is exactly who I am. And you?

LADY S. I am his wife!

SIR H. Good heavens! How extraordinary! What a lark! Won't Jack roar when he hears of it!

LADY S. Won't he chaff me. *[They both laugh.]*

WAITER *enters quickly—points his thumb over his shoulder.*

WAITER. I shouldn't keep 'em waiting, Sir 'Arry, nor you either, my lady. This way, sir! I'll show the maid in the other room. *[Exit quickly.]*

SIR H. What a jolly little mistake. *[Laughs.]*

LADY S. *[sits and laughs]*. I didn't know there was such fun to be got out of Choosing a Butler.

SIR H. *[bows to her and exit.]*

CURTAIN.

ON THE WANE.



ON THE WANE.

In Two Scenes.

Characters :

LORD GROBY.

BUTLER.

LADY GROBY.

MRS. WARMINGHAM.

LADY'S MAID.

SCENES : *The Morning Room. Town House.*

TIME : *To-day.*

ACT I.

LADY GROBY *discovered in arm-chair—reading ‘The Morning Post’—she is dressed very quietly and neatly.*

LORD GROBY *enters—evening dress.*

LADY G. Hallo ! Jack.

LORD G. Hallo !

LADY G. What's the matter ? you are dressed very early.

LORD G. Yes ! I know I am, old thing !

LADY G. But ! why ? We don't dine until eight to-night.

LORD G. Fact is ! I'm dining with the Jacobson's to-night.

LADY G. Oh ! Really ?

LORD G. Yes—and we are going to a play afterwards.

ON THE WANE.

LADY G. [*looks very crestfallen—rises and keeps touching and fingering his coat*].

LORD G. Well! what's the matter?

LADY G. Oh, Jack! what a disappointment!

LORD G. A disappointment, why? What do you mean?

LADY G. I thought this [*pauses*] being our last evening together before you start for Norway to-morrow—that it would have been nice to have a *tête-à-tête* dinner—so I put off the Wills purposely.

LORD G. The Wills? What! were they going to dine here this evening?

LADY G. Yes!

LORD G. [*is silent—frowns a little*].

LADY G. Why—Jack—don't you like them?

LORD G. Well—to tell you the truth—not much.

LADY G. But they are good bridge-players!

LORD G. That might be—but good bridge-players may have another side—and they have; they are dreadfully—horribly—frightfully—deadly dull.

LADY G. They may be all you say, [*pauses*] Jack.

LORD G. Yes!

LADY G. I do hate you going away for so long!

LORD G. [*is silent and thoughtful*].

LADY G. Jack, dear, we have never had such a long separation before. [*She touches his carefully tied tie.*]

LORD G. Oh, don't do that, Cynthia!

LADY G. [*turns away hurt*].

LORD G. How I hate the way you keep petting me!

LADY G. [*quietly*]. Do you, Jack? Forgive me! I am so sorry!

LORD G. Surely we have been married long enough to give up these silly matrimonial billings and cooings.

LADY G. [*draws away very quietly*]. Jack! I am so sorry you object to my silly attentions.

LORD G. I do!

LADY G. [*looks at him sorrowfully*]. They were very necessary to you at one time.

ON THE WANE.

LORD G. That may be—it is in the course and the nature of things they should have been—but! you must remember we are old married people—now—and it riles me to be touched and patted like a pet dog.

LADY G. Very well, dear! I won't offend again—only I wish that you had told me sooner that my ways fidget you.

LORD G. No recriminations, please—I can't stand them, I feel awfully bored and want to join my friends in a happy frame of mind.

LADY G. Very well, Jack—as you wish—and you shall do so. I am only your wife, I know, and have no right to interfere with your pleasures away from home—your comings and goings and so on.

LORD G. Yes—yes—yes—I know all that; I have heard it before—as no doubt most married men have, and there's no need to repeat it. [*Pauses.*] Well—I must go—dinner's at 7.30. Good-night!

LADY G. Good-night, Jack!

LORD G. I shall see you when I get back, I suppose—unless you are asleep, in which case I will sleep in my dressing room.

LADY G. Yes—do! I am awfully tired this evening, so shall go to bed early to make up for the last few nights. I must say good-bye, as we shan't meet again.

LORD G. [*standing quietly, thinking, and looking bored.*] Good-bye. [*Exit.*]

LADY G. [*for a second or two sits with her head in her hands as if stunned, gives a sigh, gets up and goes to 'phone.*]

LADY G. [*at 'phone.*] 5500 Gerard. [*Pauses—listens—speaks.*] It's Lady Groby speaking! Is Mrs. Warmingham at home? What's that—she is on her way to see me? Thank you! [*Sits—thinks.*] I wonder why Jack never told me before that my ways irritate him. How I wish I were not so idiotically fond of him—at the moment I feel I want his arms round me—

ON THE WANE.

making a fuss of me like he used to do. Well, well!—Nell is a real good pal—she will help me. No use hugging this trouble and fretting over it—better to thrash it out with her.

MRS. WARMINGHAM *enters*.

LADY G. Oh, is that you, dear?

MRS. W. Yes.

LADY G. I just got on the 'phone to you, and they told me you were on your way to see me.

MRS. W. Yes, and how are you, dear?

LADY G. Oh, I don't know, but I'm glad you've come. I want to see you most particularly.

MRS. W. Why, what is the matter? Had a fight with Jack?

LADY G. Not a fight, but a fright! Do you know, Nell, Jack is tired of me.

MRS. W. No, no. Come, come—nonsense!

LADY G. It is a fact; when I put my hands on him he fairly squirms.

MRS. W. Oh, does he? Then I should make him squirm a little more.

LADY G. Surely these Jewish friends of his are not alienating him from me?

MRS. W. There is no accounting for taste—she is a big and handsome woman, and very entertaining—very smart too, my dear, which you are not, my little town mouse.

LADY G. Now you remark upon it—perhaps I am not. Well, Nell, you are a clever woman of the world.

MRS. W. [*smiles*]. Yes! I am counted as being fairly sensible in other people's affairs.

LADY G. And you have had your fair share of troubles.

MRS. W. [*smiles*]. Oh, yes; I have had my share—matrimonial and otherwise.

LADY G. Help me, dear!

ON THE WANE.

MRS. W. I will, certainly. Now, then, tell me all about it; what is it you wish me to do?

LADY G. How can I get Jack back to admire and love me as he used? We have been such good pals up to the last few months. But since he has taken up with these people I hardly ever see him.

MRS. W. Perhaps it is the yachting cruise, and fishing in Norway, that is the greater attraction. Men are such curious creatures—attracted by the glitter of a ‘spoon’ bait—like fish—so perhaps it is the fishing.

LADY G. Perhaps so.

MRS. W. Now, look here, Nell—I love you, darling one, and I am going to speak very plainly to you.

LADY G. Yes, do—I beg of you. I will swallow anything you say, if in the end I get my Jack back!

MRS. W. Even the ‘spoon’ bait. Now, look here! listen to me, and don’t be offended.

LADY G. Of course, I shall not; that is understood and agreed between us.

MRS. W. The truth is, you are not making the best of yourself.

LADY G. In what way?

MRS. W. Appearance—attractiveness—looks are everything. You want better clothes? Look at the peacock—and the peahen—how attractive they are—look how the hen preens herself to attract the peacock, and *vice versâ*—therefore, do likewise.

LADY G. How clever you are!

MRS. W. Your hair must be done more up to date.

LADY G. That is an idea.

MRS. W. You want a slight dash of make-up.

LADY G. Oh, Nell!

MRS. W. Only a very teeny-weeny bit, sufficient to appear a little more natural than your own natural colour—it’s effective.

LADY G. Of course!

MRS. W. So far—for your appearance! now, if I were you, I should take a box at the Opera—in fact,

ON THE WANE.

two nights a week—to accommodate all your male friends.

LADY G. But I haven't any male friends !

MRS. W. You soon would have if you had boxes at the Opera—they come round very quickly if a woman makes a splash—two boxes are good bait to angle with.

LADY G. You are wise !

MRS. W. No, no, dear, I only take notice and see the games which go on round me. You should take up bridge.

LADY G. Isn't the game rather rapid ?

MRS. W. At times—yes—but more often what it leads to, is !—money flies at it. Have a few bridge friends to dinner—they like dining—makes them loose in their playing—easier to beat—give them good champagne. Do you ever notice how after the soup, eyes sparkle, tongues wag and asinine man brays—gently at first ; then his merriment becomes his master, and he flounders over the bridge into the water where women's wiles are baited on hooks called 'chic' to catch him.

LADY G. Nell, your little head is full of ideas.

MRS. W. Only observings, my dear.

LADY G. You're quite an observatory.

MRS. W. An observer, my dear, stupid, little girl—but ! let us get along.

LADY G. We are getting along like a house afire.

MRS. W. Oh, you're waking up, so we have a great game afterwards—in between times. You must take your bonny boys out and show them the sights of London—the Tower.

LADY G. What is there in the Tower ?

MRS. W. Oh ! souvenirs left by various people who have died for their country, and a few ghosts of good and bad people—and the jewels of the Crown all so tantalisingly kept behind big iron bars so that people with the sense of acquisitiveness mustn't touch. But we are going away from our muttons—we must return

ON THE WANE.

to the lambs—I mean the boys—show them Westminster Abbey—it will awaken in them a sense of how good they ought to be—and are not!

LADY G. Really, Nell, you take my breath away.

MRS. W. I have no wish to, dear, I'd much rather you kept it to yourself. You may need it to carry on.

LADY G. But how will all this alter Jack?

MRS. W. You will see when he returns from Norway full of fishing stories—and men are not reticent in telling them—although they are stupid enough not to see they are not believed. He will find my lady—smart, happy, and companionable with others—turn the cold shoulder on him—be independent of his passing moods. Let him enjoy himself—a man expects his wife to be companion, mother, and mistress. Be none of these things. But very few women can carry on—woman usually fails—but don't you be any of these things—and you will see how he will come back to the fold. He will appear on the hill-side preening himself like a peacock, or a stag throwing up his antlers, scenting the breeze, and looking for his doe.

LADY G. Nell, I think I see daylight.

MRS. W. Of course you do.

LADY G. I will let you educate me. But why—why—did you not try all these things on your own husband?

MRS. W. Because my love was dead—before I realised I ought to have been all these things to him—I could not bear to be second to any woman, and I don't wish to see you so either. I want to see you keep Jack interested in you, and to do so while your love for him is still alive. It is not too late, dear—for you; it was much too late for *me* when I thought it out for myself.

LADY G. To-morrow, Nell, you shall begin my education. First, dressmaker; second, hairdresser; third, face massage; fourth, milliners; then opera.

ON THE WANE.

MRS. W. And then the bridge lesson, be absorbed in cards to the detriment of your husband, and he will soon come round—men are jealous even of inanimate things. It hurts their vanity when women cease to take any notice of them. Good-bye, dear.

LADY G. Good-bye. I wish it had not been too late for you.

[MRS. W. *exits brightly*. LADY G. *smiles—her face changing and looking as if a load of years of care had been lifted from her shoulders*.

CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II.

Two months have elapsed.

Time, 7 p.m. Same Scene as Act I.

LORD GROBY *enters*.

LORD G. Where's her ladyship? [*Looks round—calls out.*] Cynn timer, Cynn timer!

LADY G. [*enters resplendent, diamond tiara, lovely frock*]. Oh, there you are; just arrived? [*Does not attempt to say 'How do you do?' and turning from him smiles to herself.*]

LORD G. [*rushes to her, tries to kiss her*]. You are looking well, Cynn timer.

LADY G. Don't untidy me, dear, please. I am just off to dine with the Fitzgeralds, and play bridge.

LORD G. But I have only just arrived, and I have been away for two months.

LADY G. [*smiles*]. The last night you left you dined with friends. How strange the night you return I

ON THE WANE.

should also be going to dine out, and play bridge too. Do you know? I have become quite a decent player. We only play for small stakes—thank goodness.

LORD G. I say, can't you put off these people. I dine at home to-night,

LADY G. Quite impossible.

LORD G. How beastly.

LADY G. I would not throw them over for the world. Would you have thrown over your friends you went to Norway with? It simply can't be done.

LORD G. Why, Cynn timer, what is the meaning of this? You have changed in your feelings to me.

LADY G. [*smiles coquettishly*]. Have I, really? You don't say so, you quite surprise me.

LORD G. Yes, as well as in your appearance.

LADY G. Quite time, too, wasn't it, dear?—besides we are much too old nowadays to bill and coo—as if we were engaged or newly married. That was your decision when you went to Norway, and I really think you are right. I swore to love, honour, and obey you—and I am obeying your mandate. [*She smiles.*] Good-night, old thing, see you at breakfast to-morrow.

[*Exits smiling.*]

LORD G. Well, I'm damned, can my absence of two months have entirely changed my sweet wife into a gay, bright, smart butterfly? Heigh-ho! I shall have to start all over again, and woo her hard, like I did eight years ago. [*Lights cigarette, smiles.*] I shall not find it very tedious, my lady; no, don't think you are going to deceive me with these new-fashioned hair-waves and manners. I know my Cynn timer too well, true, loyal as steel. Before the clock strikes ten you will be in my arms, dear lady, with your lips against mine; two people can act, so here goes.

[*Rings the bell, sits down, holds his sides.*]

BUTLER enters.

BUT. Did you ring, my lord?

ON THE WANE.

LORD G. Oh, dear! Oh, Bradford, I'm in such pain!

BUT. Are you, my lord? I'm sorry, my lord; is there anything my lord would like?

LORD G. Bring some brandy and sorrow—I mean soda—quick.

BUT. Brandy and sorrow—I mean soda, my lord! Certainly, my lord, here is some all ready at hand in case of accidents like this. Shall I send for the doctor, my lord?

LORD G. No, no, don't do that. Her ladyship is dining at the Fitzgeralds—look up their number—ask her to come to me at once—she has just this moment gone out.

BUT. Yes, my lord. [Exits to 'phone.]

LORD G. [*looks round*]. Now, Cynn timer, we shall see who can act best!

BUT. They will tell her ladyship, my lord, on arrival—so she will return at once, my lord; and as it's only in the next street she will be here at once.

LORD G. [*pretends to be in great pain*]. Oh, dear me!

BUT. Your lordship has spasms, and really must drink some more brandy and soda.

LORD G. Thank you, Bradford, thank you. I will take your advice.

BUT. Not as I holds with drink.

LORD G. You're holding the glass now, Bradford.

BUT. Your lordship always did like a joke, even when down in the dumps, and pain don't cure you of the habit.

LORD G. No, but I want to cure the pain.

BUT. And you still manage to take the brandy, my lord—thank Gawd, I'm not a Pussyfoot—nor you either, my lord. If you were, and a drop of brandy could keep you alive, you would die, my lord—my lord would die!

LORD G. [*groans*]. Don't be so damned cheerful, Bradford.

ON 'THE WANE.

BUT. Oh, my lord, I hope what I'm saying doesn't make the pain worse.

LORD G. No, Bradford, it eases it.

BUT. Thank Gawd for that, my lord—I can always make 'em cry in the servants' hall when I recites something funny—so, perhaps, my lord will be pleased if I can allez the pain in my lord's inside if I recited, 'The boy stood on the burning deck.'

LORD G. I should be grateful, Bradford, although I think the boy was a fool to remain there when he could have got away.

BUT. I think ditto likewise, my lord ; but, perhaps, if I recited to my lord it would kill him, so instead of reciting, I should suggest—begging your lordship's pardon for mentioning the word in your lordship's presence—I should have a red hot flannel on your lordship's stomach—that's what the housekeeper has when she has a twinge, and a ditto repeato of brandy, my lord.

LORD G. Go away, Bradford—for God's sake go away.

BUT. Yes, my lord, and I wish I could take your lordship's pain with me.

LORD G. I wish you could, Bradford. I wish you had it instead of me.

BUT. Thank you, my lord ; I wish I had. [*Turns and speaks aside.*] Thank Gawd I 'aven't. [*Exit.*]

[*LORD G. rolls about on the sofa and roars with laughter. Hears her ladyship coming and and pretends to be bad. LADY G. enters quickly.*]

LADY G. My darling Gee, what is the matter? Are you in pain?

LORD G. No!—yes! yes! yes! Frightful pain. I never felt so bad before.

LADY G. Darling, do send for the doctor.

LORD G. No, no. Hold my hand, Cynn timer ; that's better.

ON THE WANE.

LADY G. Dearest, is it any better?

LORD G. Yes, I am gradually improving. Oh, I am spoiling your beautiful hair, darling.

LADY G. Never mind, what does it matter what I look like?

LORD G. Cynnie, kiss me.

[Kisses him, and he hugs her.]

LADY G. Really, Gee, I do believe you—you're shamming!

LORD G. Yes, my sweetheart, I am. I felt I must have you in my arms this evening, your rightful place, and are you not content to be here? I have longed to be with you again. Your fine features and pretty clothes can appeal to others—it's you—and you alone I want.

LADY G. Gee, darling, I am quite happy.

[BRADFORD enters holding flannel.]

BUT. The red hot flannel for his lordship's stomach!

LORD G. The pain has gone, Bradford.

BUT. Has it, my lord, then as I have an attack of indigestion I'll have it myself. *[Exit.]*

CURTAIN.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

Characters :

MR. GEORGE CAREY.

MRS. BUXTON.

SYBELLE BUXTON (*her Niece*).

SCENE: *Drawing-room, Mrs. Buxton's House.*

TIME: *The Present.*

THE DRAWING ROOM: SYBELLE—a very pretty girl—*enters quickly with tennis racket—followed by* GEORGE CAREY, *in flannels.*

SYBELLE [*sits*]. Oh! dear; I am tired.

GEORGE. I am awfully sorry, what can I do? Tell me—there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do to allay anything—any fag—any boredom—or anything that troubles you.

SYBELLE. Really? [*Looks bored.*] That was a beastly game!

GEORGE. Well, you insisted upon playing with Captain Young!

SYBELLE. Did I?

GEORGE. Of course you did, instead of with me!

SYBELLE [*looks away from him*]. I am tired of playing with you.

GEORGE. Oh!

SYBELLE. Yes! every one considers I must be your partner for life!

GEORGE. By Jove, I wish you were, Sybelle.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

SYBELLE. Do you ?

GEORGE. Yes—won't you give me a definite answer now ?

SYBELLE. No, certainly not !

GEORGE. You're awfully rough on me !

SYBELLE. I would sooner shut myself up in a convent than marry you.

GEORGE. Not very flattering to me—your remark !

SYBELLE. It isn't intended to be.

GEORGE. Fact of the matter is—you're spoilt !

SYBELLE. Really ?

GEORGE. I mean it.

SYBELLE. It's very rude of you.

GEORGE. Since your return from Paris, you feel yourself too smart and superior for your old pals.

SYBELLE. Perhaps I am. [Laughs.

GEORGE. We used to be great friends, Syb ! what has changed you so ?

SYBELLE. I wish you wouldn't call me Syb. Horrible abbreviation My name is pretty—so most people think !

GEORGE. Losing your set at tennis does not seem to have improved your temper, Sybelle.

SYBELLE [*rises impetuously and goes and sits in another chair*]. Why did you send me all your hard services, and scientific cuts—merely to annoy me ?

GEORGE. It's unkind of you to say that.

SYBELLE. Because I chose to play with Captain Young, I suppose.

GEORGE. I am afraid I was a bit spiteful in my services.

SYBELLE. A bit ? a very great deal.

GEORGE. But I swear I was fair in my play—otherwise !

SYBELLE. I don't suggest you were not ! [Rises.

GEORGE. You're not going ?

SYBELLE. I'm afraid I must.

GEORGE. Why ?

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

SYBELLE. I must get some roses for the dinner-table. I had not time this morning!

GEORGE. Can I come with you and help?

SYBELLE [*going towards the exit*]. No, please don't!

GEORGE. Why not?

SYBELLE. I have had quite enough of your society for to-day. [*Exit quickly.*]

MRS. BUXTON *enters in time to hear her say this.*

[*GEORGE lights a cigarette, drops into a chair despondently.*]

MRS. B. [*comes down towards him*]. How sad you seem, George.

GEORGE. Am I?

MRS. B. Very.

GEORGE. Perhaps I have good cause.

MRS. B. Sybelle been snubbing you all the afternoon?

GEORGE. Yes!

MRS. B. Poor George!

GEORGE. Do you know? I'm sick of being snubbed!

MRS. B. I don't wonder at it. So should I be were I in your place.

GEORGE. I hate quarrelling with Syb—and I used to spar, but not fight, before she went to Paris—now—I can never say the right thing. [*Rises, buries his fists down in his trouser pockets, and hunches his shoulders.*] And I can never do the right thing! It's rotten!

MRS. B. Come and sit by me, George. I have something to tell you.

[*GEORGE turns, and comes and sits by her.*]

MRS. B. Shall I tell you what I think, George?

GEORGE. Yes, do! it will help me to carry this burthen!

MRS. B. I speak perhaps in parable, when I tell you that a few years ago when I was yachting—

GEORGE. A sort of 'once upon a time' story, eh, Mrs. Buxton?

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

MRS. B. Wait, and you will see! One of our party came and begged me to let him leave the boat at the next port, and go home.

GEORGE. This sounds interesting. Why did he do this?

MRS. B. He was very much in love with a school friend of mine, who was on board.

GEORGE. Why didn't he tell her so?

MRS. B. He meant to propose, I felt certain!

GEORGE. But didn't! preferred to run away instead of facing the music, eh?

MRS. B. Don't be too precipitate!

GEORGE. What did you do to help matters?

MRS. B. I asked him the direct question. Are you leaving us because Clara was made such a fuss of by the officers at Gibraltar?

GEORGE. And was it so?

MRS. B. He acknowledged it was!

GEORGE. And having done this, what course did you pursue?

MRS. B. I begged of him to remain until we got to Lisbon.

GEORGE. And did he?

MRS. B. Yes!

GEORGE. What a vacillating ass!

MRS. B. He was nothing of the kind—he was a sensible man, and instead of going off with his guns and rifles to East Africa, he remained on board.

GEORGE. And the wild beasts of the jungle retained life and liberty.

MRS. B. It's not a subject for levity, George, I can assure you.

GEORGE. Awfully sorry, Mrs. Buxton. Do tell me what happened.

MRS. B. After we said good-bye to all our charming friends at Gib., my friend came and talked to me most of the day [*speaking slowly*], and Clara thought he was in love with me, and felt hurt and sore.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

GEORGE. Serve her right—for hurting the man!

MRS. B. Shall I tell you the sequel?

GEORGE. Oh! do please! I should love to hear it—the case is analogous to one I know!

MRS. B. The day we arrived at Lisbon, Clara came to me and asked if she might consult me about rather an important matter. I said, No! my dear; think out things for yourself, no one can help you in the big things of life—too much responsibility for a third to give advice.

GEORGE. I suppose she accepted him, eh?

MRS. B. Yes!

GEORGE. Oh! indeed—this is quite interesting. And how has it turned out?

MRS. B. A very happy marriage, to be sure!

GEORGE. I think I am beginning to grasp your idea.

MRS. B. Good!

GEORGE. I have got to make Sybelle feel neglected and make her jealous, eh?

MRS. B. That is what is intended!

GEORGE. Well, I am ready to start any time.

MRS. B. Splendid!

GEORGE. You are to play up to me if I do!

MRS. B. [*smiles*]. Of course I shall. I love a little intrigue of this kind; it is the salt as well as the pepper of life.

GEORGE. Don't snub me if I become too forward in my wooing, will you, Mrs. Buxton?

MRS. B. No, though I am quite prepared to enter into the farce! I shall not spoil the sport of the thing!

SYBELLE enters with flowers for the dinner-table.

SYBELLE. I have found some lovely carnations for the table. [*Looks at George.*

[*GEORGE remains seated. MRS. BUXTON quietly exits.*

SYBELLE [*going to door*]. Aren't you coming to help me—Mr. Carey?

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

GEORGE. Kindly excuse me, will you—if you don't mind?

SYBELLE. I beg your pardon. [*Astonished.*]

GEORGE. I must excuse myself, as I have to go home and write some letters.

SYBELLE. Certainly! I will excuse you.

GEORGE. Mrs. Buxton has kindly asked me to come to dine and hear her sing. You know I never can resist music—specially as I simply adore your Aunt's voice.

SYBILLE. All right. Go and get ready for your musical evening.

GEORGE. Thanks!

SYBELLE. I suppose you expect me to play her accompaniments?

GEORGE. Of course; you might feel it a great privilege to do so. Very few people really care for piano alone. It is an instrument I don't care for very much. [*Aside.*] That's a nasty one—my lady. [*To her*] I bid you good-bye till this evening. [*Exits quickly.*]

SYBELLE. Good gracious! what's happened to George? he has never snapped at me like that before! Shall I run after him and make it up? I really do like him! I wonder why I was such a 'cat' this afternoon?

[*A look of consternation comes over her face, and she sits in a chair bolt upright—in wonder.*]

SCENE II: *Same room—after dinner.*

MRS. B. SYBELLE and GEORGE discovered seated.

GEORGE. I have got such a ripping new Patience to show you, Mrs. Buxton.

MRS. B. Have you?

GEORGE. Yes! May I have some cards?

MRS. B. Certainly! Sybelle, will you get the case? It is on that table by the fire.

[SYBELLE rises very slowly---puts paper down.

[GEORGE turns his head away and smiles.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

SYBELLE. I really don't see why I should fag for Mr. Carey. Can't he get them himself?

GEORGE. Sorry, Miss Buxton. Let me look for them. [*Goes, and, getting them, comes back to near Mrs. Buxton, starts playing.*]

SYBELLE [*looking astonished*]. Miss Buxton!!! [*Looks at them playing.*] I am getting fed-up with this duet between Aunt Marjorie and George. All through dinner—playing the fool together, and now I have to sit and do gooseberry. I can't stand it. I shall go into the garden. [*Exit petulantly.*]

GEORGE [*laughs joyously*]. I think the medicine is beginning to take effect!

MRS. B. Poor Sybelle!

GEORGE. Poor George! poor me!

MRS. B. We did make her unhappy all through dinner!

GEORGE. Yes! did we not?

MRS. B. I feel rather a brute now!

GEORGE. So do I!

MRS. B. But it will come all right, George!

GEORGE. Of course it will. Now you've shown me how effective it is, I can see it coming all right.

MRS. B. She does care for you!

GEORGE. Do you think so?

MRS. B. I am certain of it.

GEORGE. I could kiss you for saying that.

MRS. B. Let me call her in.

GEORGE. Shall we?

MRS. B. Why hesitate? Are you getting sorry for yourself now you see the success of my plan?

GEORGE. Oh, no—quite the other way—delighted!

MRS. B. We will get her to come in and do some songs. [*Goes to door and calls.*] Sybelle! Sybelle!

SYBELLE [*heard off*]. Yes?

MRS. B. Do come in! and play for me, darling, will you?

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

SYBELLE *enters, puts her handkerchief down, and goes to piano.*

GEORGE [*takes up her handkerchief*]. Crying! my poor Syb.! Oh! I do want to comfort her. But the end will come right for me now, I feel sure!

[SYBELLE *has started to play*. MRS. B. *sits on sofa listening*. GEORGE *sits by her*. SYBELLE *sings a pathetic song*. MRS. BUXTON *sings*.
After song :

MRS. B. [*rising*]. I am going out into the garden to get some air. [*Exit.*

GEORGE [*speaking from sofa*]. Thanks most awfully, Sybelle. I do love your playing.

[SYBELLE *rises from piano—goes up to him*.
[GEORGE *rises*.

SYBELLE. George!

GEORGE. Yes? [SYBELLE *remains mute*.

GEORGE. What is it?

SYBELLE. I want to apologise to you.

GEORGE. To me?

SYBELLE. Yes.

GEORGE. What for?

SYBELLE. For being so rude.

GEORGE. Rude!

SYBELLE. Yes!

GEORGE. To me?

SYBELLE. Yes!

GEORGE. When?

SYBELLE. This afternoon! I have—felt—I was—in—the wrong—I know I have treated you horribly—almost—past forgiveness!

GEORGE. My dearest! it is not for me to forgive—it is for you also. Let us forgive each other—with all and both our hearts.

SYBELLE. Oh, George!

GEORGE. Perhaps—some day you will also tell me that you are not tired of my everlasting proposals.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

SYBELLE. I do now. I bitterly regret—all I said and did—to-day. Ask me again some day, George!

GEORGE. I'll ask you now. Sybelle, dear, will you be my wife?

SYBELLE. Yes, George. I will.

Mrs. B. enters quickly.

Mrs. B. There is no need for words, my dears. I can see—without being told. When is it to be?

SYBELLE. Ask George?

[They look at each other and smile.]

CURTAIN.



AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.



AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

Characters :

LADY MARY SPANNER (*rich Widow*).

MABEL SPANNER (*her Niece*).

COLONEL JACK RAYMOND.

COLONEL TOM RAYMOND (*Uncle of JACK RAYMOND*).

MRS. SMITH, PARKER, WILLIAMS (*Servants*).

SCENE: *Charming Boudoir. Writing-table, arm-chair, sofa, with china and pictures.*

LADY MARY *seated at writing table.*

MABEL *enters with two vases of flowers.*

MABEL. Good morning, Aunt—my dear Aunt.

LADY M. Good morning, dear. What have you there?

MABEL. Some lovely flowers! for you.

LADY M. For me?

MABEL. Yes; I have done the dining-room vases.

LADY M. That is good of you.

MABEL. And those in the drawing-room! do you want anything else?

LADY M. No, I think that will do, dear! Oh! what about the bedrooms? We must have two for Colonel Raymond's room.

MABEL. Who is Colonel Raymond? When is he coming? What is he coming for?

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

LADY M. What a lot of questions !

MABEL. They want a lot of answers !

LADY M. He is an old friend of mine.

MABEL. Oh !

LADY M. Such a bore ! used to be in love with me.
Worried me to death with proposals.

MABEL. Splendid !

LADY M. I didn't think so ; for I knew it was more for my money—a comfortable home—I was indebted to him for his persistent attentions.

MABEL. Then why on earth, my dear Aunt, do you ask him here ?

LADY M. My dear Mabel—he asks himself.

MABEL. Really ?

LADY M. He happens to be one of my co-executors, and I am obliged to see him on business—so usually he invites himself.

MABEL. Takes French leave ! What is he like ? I am dying to see your old admirer.

LADY M. Rather dark—decidedly good-looking—is really much older than he appears to be. A real good sportsman—rides well, shoots decently, dances divinely.

MABEL. He sounds most attractive.

LADY M. Most—ahem !—yes—yes—of course.

MABEL [*laughs*]. I shall do my best to snatch him from you.

LADY M. Oh, do !

MABEL. As you evidently don't appreciate him.

LADY M. I don't.

MABEL. Or his attentions.

LADY M. The more you entice him away the more pleased I shall be.

MABEL [*tenderly*]. Will you, Aunt ?

LADY M. Yes. [*Turns and smiles at MABEL.*] He is motoring down, so may turn up any time, so now, my child, go and finish your flowers.

MABEL [*laughs*]. Righto ! I shall get the best in

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

the garden for his room even if I have to go without myself. [Exits.

[LADY M. *smiles, and go on writing.* BUTLER *enters with telegram on salver.* LADY M. *takes it, opens, and reads it.*

BUTLER. Any answer, my lady?

LADY M. No. No reply. [*Reading wire.*] Well, this is killing! my Colonel Raymond is detained in Town—but his nephew, young Raymond, is coming instead with the papers for me to sign. What a joke! I shall not tell Mabel and she will play up to him thinking he is my old lover. If only these two could make a match of it—I should be the happiest woman in the world. Jack is older looking than his age—very sedate manners—devoted to me—Mabel has not seen him, so will think he is the Colonel Raymond we expected. I wonder if he will fall in love with my niece—she has means, family all right, many good qualities. He has a lovely place in Wales—ought to marry—and I know his wife would be a lucky woman.

MABEL *re-enters.*

MABEL. Flowers are all done now.

LADY M. [*smiling*]. Excellent!

MABEL. And I found the most lovely white roses for the Colonel's room.

LADY M. You dear Mabel.

MABEL. And I got the gardener to make a most fascinating button-hole for him. What do you think of that, my aunt?

LADY M. That you are the kindest, dearest, and sweetest niece that any aunt could wish for. And now, dear, that reminds me I must go down to the village to see Ann Blake.

MABEL. Poor old thing. I hope she will get well.

LADY M. I am afraid not! in fact I don't think she will last very long—and she loves me to read to her. I have one or two little things to see to before I do

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

go—so I will leave you to look after the Colonel if he turns up before I go—if I do go—or get back. The Colonel might motor down in time for lunch. [*Exits.*]

MABEL. What fun if I really annex the Colonel, and if we make a match of it. After all, young men have never attracted me very much—who knows! [*Motor horn heard off.*] Good heavens! here is the sportsman! now for the attack!

BUTLER *enters.*

BUTLER. Colonel Raymond.

COL. R. *enters.* [BUTLER *retires.*]

MABEL. How do you do?

COL. R. How do you do?

MABEL. Won't you sit down?

COL. R. Thanks. [*Sits.*]

MABEL. My Aunt has gone down to the village to see an old lady.

COL. R. [*aside*]. I hope she'll stop there!

MABEL. Eh?

COL. R. I didn't speak!

MABEL. I thought you did!

COL. R. You were saying?—er—what about the old lady?

MABEL. She can't last long.

COL. R. That's a bad job!

MABEL. And she asked me to look after you.

COL. R. Who? the old lady?

MABEL. No—the Aunt!

COL. R. That's a good job!

MABEL [*aside*]. What a ripping person!

COL. R. [*aside*]. What a ripping girl!

MABEL [*aside*]. No effort to be nice to him!

COL. R. Do you know? I don't think this is our first meeting!

MABEL. No?

COL. R. No! Do you recollect a journey from

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

Folkestone to London—a young lady not being able to find her purse—a silly thing not to be able to do—if she had one.

MABEL. Quite !

COL. R. A man offering to lend her some money to pay for a copy of *The Tatler*; and last, but not least, do you remember this crooked sixpence ?

MABEL. Why, of course I do !

COL. R. I thought you would !

MABEL. And the quarrel we had over repayment for the papers and magazines.

COL. R. Oh ! but we made it up !

MABEL. Yes, we made it up. [*They both laugh.*] The only money I could find to pay my debt was the crooked sixpence off my bangle.

COL. R. And you would not allow me to lend you any. It was very unkind of you.

MABEL. Fancy you keeping it all this time.

COL. R. Do you think I would ever have parted with it? no! keep it? rather. It has been on my watch-chain six months, and I often wanted to meet you again—and now I have had a great wish realised.

MABEL [*aside*]. Decidedly an old flirt and wants no encouragement. [*To him.*] If you were so desperately keen about meeting me again, why have you never made any attempt to find out who I was and where I lived ?

COL. C. I did my level best to trace you. You had no name on your luggage, not even initials.

MABEL. So you were looking, then ?

COL. R. I confess to it, I was. I had not the moral courage to ask your name and address.

MABEL. Why ?

COL. R. I felt certain you would snub me.

MABEL. Surely not.

COL. R. I don't like laying myself out for rebuffs from beautiful young women travelling alone.

MABEL. You might not have received any. You forget you were doing me a kindness !

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

COL. R. You certainly gave me no encouragement. Admit, Miss Spanner, you would have squashed me had I bothered you with my conversational powers?

MABEL. Yes, I do admit that.

COL. R. [*smiles*]. There!

MABEL. You see I have always hated travelling alone, and in every passenger I suspect lunacy or thieving, so I was thankful when you settled in your own corner and read your paper.

COL. R. I say, what a lovely place this is; gardens are so large and well arranged.

MABEL. I am glad you like it.

COL. R. Oh, I do, indeed; quite charming. Beautiful avenue the way I motored up.

MABEL. Would you like to see round the place?

COL. R. Very much indeed.

MABEL. We could go to the stables first and see if your horses have arrived.

COL. R. Good idea.

MABEL. The stud groom said he was getting two loose boxes ready, and then we could see the gardens afterwards. Just time before lunch.

[*She exits, he following.*]

LADY MARY *enters, taking off her gloves.*

LADY M. I shall not have time to go and see poor Ann Blake before lunch.

BUTLER *enters with another telegram.*

LADY M. [*reads it out*]. 'After all, I can get down to-day. Arrive 12.30 train.—RAYMOND.' [*To BUTLER.*] When did this come?

BUTLER. Just now, my lady, over the 'phone.

LADY M. What have you done?

BUTLER. I ordered a small car to meet that train.

LADY M. How very tiresome. I do wish he had stayed in Town; now my little plot will be interrupted, and Mabel will cease pursuing Jack and freeze into an

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

icicle when she knows I have planned this little game.
[Turns, sees BUTLER.] Williams?

BUTLER. Yes, my lady!

LADY M. Can we put the Colonel off?

BUTLER. Oh, no, my lady!

LADY M. Why?

BUTLER. That would be impossible.

LADY M. How so?

BUTLER. The car is already due at the station, and he may be here any minute.

LADY M. Can we hide him?

BUTLER. Well, my lady!

LADY M. Oh, do help me, Williams! I must do something to prevent the Colonel meeting my young people.

BUTLER. I have an idea, my lady.

LADY M. What is it?

BUTLER. Suppose I take a day off.

LADY M. For what reason? What purpose?

BUTLER. Then the Colonel can act as butler, dressed up in the clothes he wore the last time you had the theatricals here.

LADY M. Splendid idea, Williams.

BUTLER. I am glad you like it, my lady.

LADY M. You are a brick.

BUTLER. Thank you, my lady.

LADY M. We will also put a patch on one eye to disguise him.

BUTLER. Yes, my lady. Patch his eye.

LADY M. Thank you so much, Williams. You have got me out of a great difficulty.

BUTLER [aside]. Perhaps into one! [To her] Well, my lady, you have deceived Miss Mabel by pretending the Colonel is already here in his nephew—you cannot undeceive her now.

LADY M. You are quite right.

BUTLER. I hope I am, my lady. So that is settled. I may have the day off. [Aside.] I wish the Colonel

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

would come oftener, and I should have more days off if there was more deceiving going on.

LADY M. So that is settled. You have the day off, and you will have to instruct the Colonel.

BUTLER [*aside*]. I've got 'em into trouble. I wonder 'ow they will get out of it. All my doing. [*Exit.*]

LADY M. It is a very different thing to act a butler on the stage, and to act a real butler off it. [*Smiles.*] Rather risky proceeding; but I remember how fond the Colonel is of playing funny old men parts in amateur theatricals. I expect he will fall in with my views.

BUTLER *enters announcing* COL. R.

COL. R. *enters.*

[BUTLER *exit.*]

COL. R. You must forgive me changing my plans so often.

LADY M. Your changing causes much changing.

COL. R. I wanted so much to run down and see you—and some other Johnnie is taking the chair at the meeting.

LADY M. I will forgive you on one condition.

COL. R. And that is?

LADY M. You will become an actor!

COL. R. What an awful thing to do!

LADY M. And take the part of my butler—that is, pass yourself off as——

COL. R. What! take Williams' place?

LADY M. Yes.

COL. R. No, no. Please don't ask me to take part in any more theatricals. I've had enough.

LADY M. This is the only way I can possibly allow you to stay here.

COL. R. How awful.

LADY M. You'll be very good. If you won't accept, then I must order the motor to take you straight back to Town.

COL. R. That would be a frightful blow.

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LADY M. You see—it is this way. I want Jack——
Sit down and I'll explain. [COL. R. *sits*.

LADY M. I want Jack and Mabel to fall in love.

COL. R. This is interesting.

LADY M. Mabel thinks Jack is you. She also thinks you are in love with me.

COL. R. Well, that is true!

LADY M. No interruptions, please! Mabel boasts she will alienate your affections from me. Knowing I don't want them.

COL. R. Well, I really do call this Farce—more than Farce—a perfect scandal. I cannot do it!

LADY M. Oh, yes, you will. You have always done everything I have asked you before. Say yes.

[*Places both hands on his shoulders.*

COL. R. Yes, but I shall require some very big recompense in exchange for this awful ordeal.

LADY M. What?

COL. R. Your hand in marriage. [LADY M. *laughs and exit.* COL. R. *laughs. Exit after her.*

MABEL and JACK re-enter.

MABEL [*entering first, speaking as she comes down right*]. I thought I should be able to annex Aunt Mary's Colonel easily, but I had no idea I was going to have such a warm response to my efforts. [JACK *comes down to her left. She turns to him.*] I am glad your hunters have arrived. I was so afraid that our hunt to-morrow would have to be put off.

JACK. That would have been sad!

MABEL. It is one of the best meets, and I do hope we shall have good sport.

JACK. So do I!

MABEL. I am so looking forward to it.

JACK. So am I! [*Looks sweetly at her.*] I feel so really happy now that we have met and become such friends.

[MABEL *smiles at him.*

JACK. Don't think me a sentimental ass.

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MABEL. Oh, I don't!

JACK. But I have prayed so hard that we might meet again.

MABEL. That is awfully nice of you.

JACK. You have been so sweet and kind to me since I arrived I cannot help thinking that you are not altogether indifferent to me. I have always had a great admiration for your Aunt.

MABEL [*rather crossly*]. Oh, yes. I know that. But I don't believe you have any chance there.

JACK. Chance there? What do you mean? I adore your Aunt, but I am not in love with her.

MABEL. Oh, no! [*Smiles.*]

JACK. Since our meeting three months ago you have been constantly in my thoughts. In fact, if I speak honestly, you are far more to me than any other woman I have ever seen. [*MABEL looks pleased.*]

LADY MARY *enters.*

LADY M. Hallo, Jack! How do you do? [*Shakes hands.*] I do hope Mabel has been good to you and shown you all my cows.

JACK. Yes. They're ripping!

LADY M. Also the pigs!

JACK. They're splendid.

LADY M. And the chickens.

JACK [*looking at MABEL*]. I adore—er—chickens!

LADY M. And last—but not least—my rock garden.

JACK. Yes, I was on the rocks—I mean in the rock garden.

LADY M. I do take such a pride in it.

JACK. Yes! Miss Spanner has been awfully good to me. I only hope I have not bored her to death.

LADY M. [*smiles*]. Apparently not!

COL. R. *enters disguised.*

COL. R. Luncheon is served, my lady!

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

LADY M. Shall we go in ?

[MABEL and JACK *exit first*, and as LADY M. *leaves the room she looks at* COL. R.]

LADY M. I really did not recognise you. You are too splendid for words.

[*Laughs at him, and exit quickly.*]

COL. R. [*aside*]. I feel like the biggest ass that ever looked through a collar. [*Exit sadly.*]

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

COL. R. *seated in chair at ease.*

COL. R. I'm quite fed up with being the butler and helping others to what I should like to help myself to. [*Turns his head and looks out of room.*] I wish they would leave the dining-room and come in here, and so give me an opportunity of slipping in and snatching a glass of port. I'm quite angry with that nephew of mine—the autocratic way he looks at me. I should never have thought Jack could treat any one so. His head must be turned.

LADY MARY and MABEL and JACK *enter*.

LADY M. [*to* COL. R.] Fetch the coffee, please.

[COL. R. *looks at* JACK.]

[JACK *looks at* COL. R., *who exits*.]

JACK. Extraordinary ass of a fellow that butler of yours is.

COL. R. [*re-enters*]. I beg your pardon.

LADY M. That will do, Williams. Colonel Raymond is not addressing you. [COL. R. *bows*.]

MABEL. How odd that new butler is, Aunt.

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

LADY M. He is, a little.

MABEL. Where did you rake him up? I never saw such an old ass.

COL. R. *enters with the coffee. He hands it round.*

MABEL and LADY M. *take theirs.*

[COL. R. *goes to JACK.*

JACK. O-oh! I say. You trod on my foot.

COL. R. [*aside*]. So glad! [*To him*] Did I? sir. I am so sorry.

JACK [*aside to him*]. Stupid ass!

COL. R. So are you.

JACK [*looks at him, under his breath*]. Did you say something?

COL. R. No, sir. [*Aside*] I'd like to. I could say a devil of a lot.

LADY M. Bring Colonel Raymond a liqueur.

COL. R. I don't mind if I do take a Kimmel! Ahem! I mean—— What would you like, sir?

JACK. I'll have a Benedictine, if I may.

COL. R. He knows what is good for him.

JACK. Eh?

COL. R. You said a Benedictine, sir?

JACK. I said a Benedictine! [COL. R. *exit.*

JACK [*to LADY M.*]. I am sure your butler is a little hazy—to put it mildly.

MABEL. You must discharge him, my dear Aunt.

LADY M. We have much to put up with nowadays. Still, I suppose one must be thankful for small mercies.

[COL. R. *enters with Benedictine on a tray. Comes to*

JACK, *stumbles, and upsets the liqueur down his neck.*

JACK. Damn! Oh! I beg your pardon, Lady Mary, and you too, Miss Spanner. [*Aside to COL. R.*] Confound you, you damned ass.

COL. R. Confound you, you damned ass.

JACK. What is that?

COL. R. I was repeating what you said, sir.

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JACK. Then don't repeat it.

COL. R. Will you have another, sir?

JACK. Not down my neck, thank you.

COL. R. Very sorry, sir—very sorry. It shall not occur again.

JACK. I'll take care of that.

COL. R. [*aside*]. After that I shall go into the dining-room and help myself to a glass of port.

[*Exit smiling.* LADY M. *laughs.*

MABEL. Why are you laughing?

LADY M. Forgive me! [*to JACK*].

JACK [*standing up, wiping his neck. Laughs*]. Oh! I don't mind, Lady Mary. If it causes you fun I'm only too delighted. Shall I ask him to do it again,

LADY M. No, no, not for anything.

MABEL. Have you received good news? or a fortune?

LADY M. Yes, I do feel rather happy.

MABEL. That is lovely.

LADY M. And contented also—to-day! I admit things have gone smoothly for me.

JACK. I can't say they have with me.

LADY M. By the way, won't you and Jack have a ride this afternoon?

JACK [*to MABEL*]. What do you say?

LADY M. If you care to go to the stables and tell Hutchins, you can have my grey, and Mabel can ride one of her own gees.

JACK. Oh, thanks so much!

MABEL. Then I will go and put my habit on.

LADY M. I shall not expect to see you until tea-time. I must read the papers and attend to my correspondence.

[*JACK and MABEL go towards exit.*

MABEL [*turns and waves her hand to LADY M.*]. Till tea-time, Aunt mine.

[*Exit.*

[*JACK waves his hand and smiles. Exit.*

LADY M. Everything is going splendidly for my little plan.

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COL. R. *enters.*

COL. R. Are you alone?

LADY M. Yes!

COL. R. Look here, Mary, I'm fed up with this idiotic part.

LADY M. Oh, don't say that!

COL. R. Playing the silly ass. You have no conception what I have endured in the Housekeeper's room.

LADY M. How?

COL. R. Mrs. Smith was furious with me when I helped your pretty maid first.

LADY M. You should have remembered their etiquette.

COL. R. How the deuce could I know their etiquette? to give the plate to the Housekeeper first.

LADY M. What else has upset you?

COL. R. Oh, lots of other mistakes. It was perfectly beastly.

LADY M. You will have to see this thing through for me.

COL. R. I will take these bally things off and run away.

LADY M. My dear Colonel, you must keep your promise—everything is progressing so well. Don't spoil sport.

COL. R. Well, remember. If you don't accept me next time I propose, which is at this present moment, I shall chuck!

LADY M. All right. Anything to get rid of you. Now, take away these coffee-cups and ask the boy to wash them up.

COL. R. Thank you. And what is my programme now?

LADY M. You as butler can retire to your room and read the papers—of yesterday.

COL. R. I have read yesterdays.

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LADY M. Then you must read a book—or sleep. But remember, if any one calls, you must answer the door and announce the visitors.

COL. R. Oh, that's all right. Now you've accepted me, I'll do anything you like.

LADY M. Give me the *Morning Post*.

[COL. R. *does so*.

LADY M. Now you may go.

[COL. R. *takes coffee-cups on tray and salver, and exit*.

[LADY M. *sits in a comfortable chair, lights a cigarette, and begins to read the paper. Knock at door*.

LADY M. Come in.

MRS. SMITH *enters*.

MRS. S. Can I speak to you, my lady?

LADY M. More trouble! What is the matter?

MRS. S. My lady, I really cannot put up with this extemporary butler.

LADY M. Why not, Mrs. Smith?

MRS. S. He knows no more about his business than James the pantry boy.

LADY M. Really?

MRS. S. Fact, my lady. James could do his duties better, in my humble opinion.

LADY M. Mrs. Smith, it is only for to-day. Williams has gone to see his mother, and this man has only come to oblige.

MRS. S. Williams must be a bit of a liar!

LADY M. Ssh—ssh! Mrs. Smith.

MRS. S. I mean a wicked prevaricating storyteller. He told me he was an orphan. Seeing that we are keeping company I should have thought I knew why he was called away so sudden.

LADY M. [*in despair*]. Please, Mrs. Smith, don't mind this temporary butler. He is really doing his best. You will feel quite different about things in the morning.

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Mrs. S. I 'ope so, my lady.

LADY M. Sleep over it. Don't give in your notice.

Mrs. S. I don't want to, my lady.

LADY M. You know how I appreciate your cooking.

Mrs. S. Yes, my lady. I know you speak 'ighly of my devilled kidneys.

LADY M. Oh, I do—I do!

Mrs. S. And my homlets.

LADY M. Gorgeous, Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. S. And my fricassees.

LADY M. Positively wonderful.

Mrs. S. Thank you, my lady.

LADY M. And consider how well I study your interests.

Mrs. S. Hah! my lady, if people thought of me as much as I do of their insides, there wouldn't be so much bitter feeling about, which always leaves a nasty taste in the mouth.

LADY M. Ah, but, Mrs. Smith, your cooking always leaves a pleasant taste.

Mrs. S. My lady, I would do anything for you.

LADY M. Then do it, and remain.

Mrs. S. I will. Thank you, my lady. [*Exit.*]

LADY M. Oh! dear me—the troubles of a hostess!
[*Takes up paper to read again.*]

LADY'S MAID *enters.*

MAID. If you please, milady.

LADY M. What is it?

MAID. I am sorry to disturb you, milady, but I wish to give notice.

LADY M. Notice?

MAID. Yes, milady.

LADY M. Why?

MAID. I really couldn't live with such a creature.
[*Col. R. enters.*].—Ere he is—milady—look at him!
You call yourself a butler?

COL. R. That is what others call me!

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MAID. Well, I don't, he can't even hand a plate proper.

COL. R. Or improper.

MAID. I wouldn't trust yer!

LADY M. Remember who you are before.

MAID. I hope he will too, milady. He 'as no more idea of his duties than the man in the moon.

COL. R. I believe I am the man in the moon.

MAID. You hear, milady. That's the sort of language he uses—something awful. He called me a pretty stuck-up piece of goods.

LADY M. Did you?

COL. R. And are you not? You want smacking.

MAID. Not by you.

LADY M. Really remember who you are before.

MAID. What do think of him, milady?

LADY M. I really do not know what to say.

MAID. I do. I could keep on saying what I think of him all day long.

COL. R. And all night long, I should say.

MAID. You would! I don't wonder poor Mrs. Smith wants to leave.

LADY M. I am really sorry, Parker, to see you put out.

COL. R. So am I.

MAID. Then he has lapses, milady, into a gentleman's tone of voice—that comes from mixing with his superiors. To hear him scolding you'd think he was the Bishop of London—that gentle and soft and sweet—but I'm not taking any, for I heard him swear. P'r'aps the Bishop does too.

COL. R. I'm sure he would if he had to put up with you.

MAID. I am sure he would if he had to put with you. [Exit.]

LADY M. Oh! what a hornet's nest I have brought down about my ears.

COL. R. Oh! what hornets we entise, when we

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

start to tell white lies—pardon the metre and liberties I take with the King's English, but those are my sentiments.

LADY M. To think I should be so harassed and worried just because I wished to have a little amusement.

COL. R. You have it !

LADY M. I have a great mind to send you away.

COL. R. If you do, you break your agreement with me. 'That I shall keep you to. My word is my bond.

LADY M. And so is mine. At the same time I don't see why you should hamper my little scheme.

COL. R. I would not for anything in the world.
[*He kisses her hand.*] I'll see you through.

[*LADY M. smiles at him and exit.*

JACK enters dressed for riding.

JACK [*very peremptory*]. Look here ! get me a glass of port, will you ? and sharp's the word.

COL. R. [*looks at him, turns, goes to door, turns again*]. Well, I'm damned !

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

EVENING.

MABEL *seated at piano, playing and singing.* JACK *enters in hunting evening dress, stands and watches her, then comes near her.* She breaks into 'A fine Hunting Day.' JACK *joins in the chorus.* She sings three verses, rises suddenly, and comes down stage to right.

JACK [*follows and sits near her*]. You sing divinely.

MABEL [*looking at him inquiringly*]. Yes ?

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JACK. Yes. Will you sing like that when we are married?

MABEL. What is that you say?

JACK. When we are married!

MABEL. I have never agreed to marry you.

JACK. Silently you gave consent.

MABEL. You have never asked me.

JACK. No need to—it is all transmitted by thought, nowadays. Wireless telegraphy has shown us the way.

MABEL. You mean telepathy.

JACK. Tell something. All I know is, that it is!

MABEL. You are very sure.

JACK. Sure! as they say over the water.

MABEL. What about my Aunt?

JACK. What about her?

MABEL. What will she say?

JACK. What should she say?

MABEL. She will feel it frightfully.

JACK. Feel what?

MABEL. You proposing to me.

JACK. I should think by the encouragement she has given me by leaving us so much together she will be glad.

MABEL. But—you—are—very—fond—of—her?

JACK. Naturally, I adore your Aunt because she is your Aunt, as I would adore any other Aunt—Uncle—I mean sister—or female relation of yours—as I adore everything belonging to you. But I'm not in love with your Aunt. It is you I am in love with; and I want—you—for—my—wife. [*Takes her hand.*] Will you marry me?

MABEL. I must think about it.

JACK. Why think about it? What is there to think about? You don't want to think so much about choosing a husband as you do about choosing a new dress. Here he is! Take him.

MABEL. Oh, Jack!

JACK. That quite sufficient. When a woman says 'Oh, Jack!' it is 'Oh—Jack'—it's settled. [*They kiss.*]

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

Now that's settled, I'll have a cigarette. Will you excuse me while I go and fetch my case. [*Exit.*]

MABEL. How matter of fact men become when they have effected their purpose. I wish I had deferred saying 'Oh, Jack!' a little while longer, in order to hear him make love so prettily as he does. 'Oh, Jack!' How prosaic! yet what a world of meaning there is in those two words.

LADY M. *enters.*

MABEL. Aunt Mary, do you think Colonel Raymond is still very much in love with you?

LADY M. Yes, why?

MABEL [*aghast*]. Are you going to marry him?

LADY M. Yes, at last I have accepted him.

[*She sits and plays piano.*]

MABEL [*looks surprised*]. I congratulate you. [*Aside.*] What a silly fool I have been to think I could win her Colonel. Oh, Jack!

JACK *re-enters.*

JACK. So sorry I had to leave you. But I also found your waiter had spilt some custard over my coat, and I had to change it. He can't wait for nuts. You never saw such a beastly mess I was in; and also, Lady Mary, twice he interrupted the conversation to tell me what was second in the National last year and deliberately kicked me when I was relating to you how Uncle Tom was swindled over his National bet. When is Williams coming back?

LADY M. To-morrow morning, I sincerely hope. Perhaps I had better go and tell this waiter that he can go then. [*Going towards exit.*]

JACK. Yes, for goodness' sake get rid of the old dud or I will smash his head.

LADY M. Oh, please don't think of such a thing. He is doing his best.

JACK [*going to Mabel, looks at her keenly*]. Mabel, darling, you've been crying. What is the matter?

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

please tell me. I will kill any one who has made you unhappy—the brute. What is it, dear?

MABEL [*indignantly*]. How you can call me darling and dear—you who are engaged to Aunt Mary—accepted at last after proposing so many times. Don't touch me. I hate you!

JACK. Please explain. I am quite in the dark.

MABEL. Aunt Mary has just informed me since we came from dinner, of her engagement to you—so why deny it?

JACK. You are dreaming or mad. It is Uncle Tom who is dying to marry her—not me.

MABEL. Are you not old Colonel Raymond, Aunt's great admirer?

JACK. Old—thank you! I am not old Colonel Raymond!

MABEL. Then who are you?

JACK. I am John—commonly called Jack. My uncle is Thomas—old Tom to his friends. We are both Colonels—hence we often get mixed up.

MABEL. Oh, Jack!

JACK. Oh, Jack! That's right. [*Kisses her.*]
Come for a stroll—the moon is full, and I have so much to say to you. [*They exit.*]

LADY M. *enters, looks after them, smiles.*

COL. R. *enters.*

COL. R. There go the two love-birds.

LADY M. [*turns—sees him*]. Oh, Tom!

COL. R. Oh, Tom! that settles it. I know by that ejaculation that you love me.

LADY M. Yes, dear, I—do. [*Moves to piano and runs her fingers over the keys idly.*]

COL. R. Mary, why should we wait?

[*LADY M. looks down.*]

COL. R. Life is slipping by—some happy and bright years, God willing! are ahead of us—let us

AUNT MARY'S GREAT DESIRE.

enjoy them. Let me put the banns up next Sunday. What do you say?

LADY M. Oh, Tom!

COL. R. That settles it—it is to be.

[LADY M. sings. *He joins in.*

[NOTE.—*If the audience wants an encore—*COL.

R. *takes another song from off the piano—already placed there—in case! She plays, and they—or he—or she sings alone.*

JACK and MABEL enter, looking very happy.

JACK [*seeing the BUTLER singing*]. Well! of all the cheek! the butler singing in the drawing-room. [*To him*] You ought to be singing in the pantry—not here!

COL. R. Excuse me, Colonel Raymond, I have as much right to sing here as any one, for Lady Mary and I are engaged to be married.

JACK. What, marry the butler?

LADY M. And why not? he is a good butler. He spilt the soup and the custard and the coffee, and played the part to perfection.

[COLONEL laughs, as he takes off wig and patch and laughs again. LADY M. laughs too.

JACK. Uncle?

COL. R. Yes—uncle—and I have yet to pay you out, my boy, for abusing me. [*Laughs.*] But I forgive you—and as a happy occasion is in front of us all, let us as soon as we can 'Grant Aunt Mary her great Desire,' and all be married the same day.

[MABEL sits at the piano, plays and sings, and the others gather round piano.

CURTAIN.

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